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THE WHITE HOUSE

BRIEFING FOR REPORTERS
BY JODY POWELL AND JACK WATSON

The Briefing Room

(3:37 P.M. EST)

MR. POWELL: Jack Watson has a little reporting to do for you on the transition arrangements. Let me let him do that first. I have very little, if anything, to offer beyond that, but once he's done that and we've dealt with whatever questions you may have on that specific topic, then I'll be glad to deal with whatever else you're interested in.

Q Have you talked to the President today, Jody?

MR. POWELL: No. There goes my reputation.

MR. WATSON: Unaccustomed as I am to presidential transitions, let me briefly outline what we're doing now so that it will be clear what steps we've taken. I think I can do this in a very summary fashion just to bring you up to date on what's happened, literally, in the last two or three days, and then I'll be happy to take any questions you have related to the transition specifically.

Before the President left for Camp David yesterday morning I met privately with him specifically to discuss the next 10-week period and particularly to discuss the arrangements for the transition. As you know, he asked me to coordinate or direct the transition from our side over to Governor Reagan's administration, and I am doing that.

Yesterday afternoon I had a series of conference calls beginning with a conference call with the Cabinet and followed by similar conference calls to all the major agency heads in the government. This morning I met with all of the unit heads and senior White House staff in the Executive Office of the President to pass on the president's instructions that he had given me yesterday morning.

Briefly stated, those instructions are basically two. The first is that the President wants the transition from the Carter administration to Mr. Reagan's forthcoming administration to be as constructive and smooth and effective a transition as has ever occurred. He wants every member of our administration to pledge their best efforts to briefing the incoming folks who will be representing Governor Reagan on those matters which they need to know about, which will give them as much of a headstart as they can possibly have on assuming the government responsibility on January 20th of next year.

The President has instructed, through me and through these conference calls to all the leaders, that fullest cooperation and a full and forthcoming effort on our part is the standard to be adhered to. That message has been clearly given to everyone and I think enthusiastically accepted by everyone.

The second instruction was really just the statement of what I think is an obvious point but of such importance that it bears repeating. Governor Reagan himself mentioned this in his press conference at 2:00 o'clock, which some of you may have seen. In our

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government, though we have the election in the fall, the authority and responsibility for the conduct of the affairs of the United States government does not shift in any way, in any respect, until the new president is inaugurated on the following January 20th. So that while we will be cooperating to the fullest extent in the briefing and passing of information and whatever other advice is sought, the responsibility for making decisions, for taking actions during the next approximately 10 weeks, remains with the President, the Vice President, and the members of his administration. That instruction is also very clearly understood by the members of our government and I think by you.

I have asked also on behalf of the President for each of the agency heads to appoint, as was done in 1976 very productively, a senior person in each department or agency to act as the transition official. In effect, the agency head himself or herself, the Cabinet secretary or the head of an Executive Office unit, is responsible for insuring that the transition is effectuated smoothly. But as a practical matter, one senior official reporting directly to the secretary or the agency head will have the day-to-day responsibility, much as I do, on behalf of the President, for executing the transition.

I have also asked, on behalf of the President, for all agency heads to see that there is prepared briefing materials, essential, concise, compact, briefing materials, which would highlight major work in progress, major decisions that will need to be made post-January 20 by the new administration, in effect, briefing materials which will give Governor Reagan and his people, again, the maximum advantage to anticipate what kinds of decisions they will be faced with. Those briefing materials I have asked for on behalf of the President by November the 15th. I think they will be ready for transmission to Mr. Reagan's people in a week following.

I had a conversation by telephone yesterday afternoon with Ed Meese, who, as you know, has been designated by Governor Reagan as the director of the transition on their side. I also learned, as you did, this afternoon, that Governor Reagan has appointed an executive transition committee, which Mr. Casey is chairing and Mrs. Armstrong is vice chairing. My dealings have not been with either of those two people but with Mr. Meese, and I will maintain a regular contact with him.

I asked that Mr. Meese give to me, again as we did in 1976 I think very effectively, the names of individuals who will be responsible for the transition liaison with the various departments and agencies. The reason we do that is a simple one. While both sides want there to be the fullest measure of cooperation and exchange of information, both sides also want there to be a minimum of disruption. By having the name of the individual, for example, who will be in charge of transition for Mr. Reagan with a given department, I can inform the Cabinet secretary or agency head and that senior transition official of who that is so that it's clear from the very outset that that person or people whom that person specifically designates are the only people with whom folks in the government should deal.

We found in 1976 that that worked very well. There is a tendency on some occasions for people who are not authorized to ask for information. By approaching it in the manner I've just outlined we can minimize the disruption.

Mr. Meese remains in California, I think, over the weekend and will not come to Washington until next Tuesday afternoon or Tuesday night. He and I have tentatively set a meeting between the two of us for Wednesday. We have not set up a particular time. I

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suspect I will be talking to him tomorrow afternoon just for updates on what we are doing and what he is doing and to answer any questions he may have, but the first meeting that will occur will not be until next Wednesday.

We'll be happy to make a photo opportunity available.

Q Person -to-person?

MR. WATSON: That will be the first person-to-person, face-to-face contact between Mr. Meese and myself, though we will talk, I'm reasonably sure, several times between now and then on the telephone.

As Governor Reagan mentioned in his press conference just a few minutes ago, the President has asked also that Governor Reagan and Mr. Bush be given the intelligence briefings on a daily basis including the President's daily briefing called the PDB and other relevant intelligence information. We are making arrangements. I have already spoken with Stansfield Turner and contacts have been made with Ed Meese to effectuate that.

There again, the necessity for a very careful command and control of that information, of course, is a high priority, but that's being done.

Q When will they start?

MR. WATSON: I suspect that they'll actually start, probably, sometime early next week. In 1976, President Ford made the offer -- the same offer that we made this year the day after the election occurred. It took about, it's my recollection, a week to get everything worked out so that it could be done with the proper security, but I've already talked to Mr. Meese about that and he has clearly as was revealed in the press conference, talked to Governor Reagan and that will be done as soon as possible.

I might just refresh your memory without going into detail about what is called the President's Transition Act of 1963. In brief, that act was passed to assure the continuity in the faithful execution of the laws and the conduct of the affairs of the federal government. That's in the title. Simply stated it means that because there is so much to be transferred, and in order to assure within the limits of our ability to do so, an orderly transfer of the authority and responsibility, monies are made available by the Congress for the transition.

In 1963, the amount was \$2 million. That was not changed until 1976, at which time the Congress authorized and appropriated \$3 million. \$2 million of which is available for the incoming President, \$1 million of which is available to the outgoing President and Vice President. This is a fine point, but I'll just mention it. The House approved an appropriation of the full \$3 million. The Senate cut it back to \$2.5 million. That

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has not been finally resolved yet, and will be resolved in the session that will begin next week. It could be done by a continuing resolution, but I anticipate no problems there at all.

Q Two million for the Reagan people?

MR. WATSON: And one million for President Carter

Q Five hundred million for --

Q Five hundred thousand.

MR. WATSON: No, if it stays, I expect the full amount. I expect that we will have the full three million. I think, without trying to anticipate every single question that you might have, that those cover the essential elements of what's happened. I anticipate. I must tell you, a very smooth and constructive transition. These matters are terribly important because of the importance of the transfer of all this responsibility. Both Mr. Meese, and I'm sure all the people on behalf of Governor Reagan, as well as all the people working on behalf of the President, are eager to see that this is done professionally, fully, and well.

Q What kinds of additional presidential support are being made available now to Reagan. For example, WHCA Air Force transportation, things like that-- has that been done or is that being done?

MR. WATSON: It has not been done but it will be done. I can't give specific detailed information on that because those are some of the kinds of details that I'll be discussing with Mr. Meese as to exactly what the Governor's requirements will be. But I can assure you that the kinds of facilities that we can make available, communications and otherwise, which will assist the Governor in moving through this transition, we will make available. That's really what that money is for.

Q Do you know where Mr. Reagan will be based during the transition period?

MR. WATSON: I do not know that for sure. That's one of the subjects that I'll be talking further about with Mr. Meese tomorrow.

Q There was reportedly a house -- (inaudible).

MR. WATSON: In 1976, let me say that, for those of you who don't remember, President-elect Carter spent most of his time during the transition in Georgia. It was only on occasion that he came to Washington for meetings and briefings and so forth. On those occasions, which I think never lasted on any one occasion for more than just two or three days, President Ford made the Blair House available. We will similarly make the Blair House available, but I have not worked out those details, and I do not know exactly what the Governor's plans are.

Q With regard to the security briefings, if you could give us some idea as to how the logistics of that would be carried out -- would it be done over any kind of secure phone line, or would it be a messenger going out with these briefings, or what?

MR. WATSON: I have not gotten the report back from Stansfield Turner. All that I can say at this point is, the highest

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security will be maintained on that, and the details, as I requested of Stan Turner yesterday, will be worked out by him and reported back to me for --

Q How was this done four years ago?

MR. WATSON: It was done by a combination of messenger and personal transmission and secure phone. But I don't have those details right now.

Q What will you hope to do differently, by way of helping them to improve on what your experience was?

MR. WATSON: Let me say in the sincerest way, that in 1976 the Ford administration, I thought, went to extraordinary measures to be forthcoming and cooperative with us. I have never forgotten that. I have never forgotten how helpful it was. They're not many ways, in truth, that we can improve on that. I've talked, as a matter of fact, with Jack Marsh, I did so yesterday-- Jack Marsh, as you may recall, was the man whom President Ford designated as his transition director to the Carter administration -- just to refresh my mind on some of the things that they had done for us -- we are doing all of those things. Mainly, Walt, it's a matter of setting an attitude on the part of all the people on both sides who are engaged in this process, an attitude which is positive, forthcoming, constructive and cooperative. And, at the President's instructions, I have been doing, and will continue to do everything possible to see that that attitude permeates this government. And I think it will.

Q --on the other side now, what is the essential pitfall. the biggest pitfall that you ran into on the other end when you did it four years ago? Is there one thing that you tend to look at the trees rather than the forest, or is there any specific problem that you encountered that you didn't expect?

MR. WATSON: I can tell you that a transition in is more fun than a transition out. I can also tell you that, on a very practical level, in my conversations over the telephone on these conference calls yesterday, I urged everyone not to come forward with volume upon volume of information describing everything in God's creation about the department, because it was my experience in 1976, on a practical level, that the value of the materials is almost inversely proportional to their volume.

If the people who are doing the transition materials from the government really exercise some degree of common sense and judgment and a high degree of priority setting of what is most important, and what is less important, and share that judgmental information and judgmental priority setting with the folks who are coming in, it's far more valuable than just giving a kind of unexpurgated disgorgement of bureaucratic information. I think that the folks that I've talked to on the phone are going to do it more or less as I have outlined. Helen?

Q When you came into office the so-called plum book which had been like this wide for all the federal appointees and so forth, the Schedule C, was much smaller than for Nixon and so forth. Is it going to be the same size?

MR. WATSON: It's about the same size now, Helen. I have not gone back to check in a specific way, but the presidential appointments are in the range of 2500. There were about that many

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for us in 1976 government-wide, and there are approximately that many now.

Q Tell us whether Meese accepted your proposal that these transition people be appointed by function and if so, did he indicate when that would be accomplished?

MR. WATSON: He did agree. Let me clarify your question not by function, but by department or area. In other words, I've asked, in effect, Mr. Meese, to give me a list agency by agency, department by department, of the name of the senior official on behalf of Governor Reagan who will be responsible for the transition. That person will meet, in most cases, with the secretary of the department in the first instance, clearly with the senior transition official, and will work out with them what other people are necessary to be involved in the transition. Obviously, the transition to these large departments will require the efforts and time and work of more than one person. But I want it all to go through this command and control central point first, and Mr. Meese has agreed with that enthusiastically.

Q Cabinet departments only or how far down will it go?

MR. WATSON: No, they include Cabinet agencies as well as the Veterans' Administration, the General Services Administration, the Community Services Administration, ACTION, the Peace Corps and so forth.

Q Jack, will somebody from the Reagan team actually move into the White House soon?

MR. WATSON: No.

Q Nobody? You don't intend to give them any office space until after January 20th?

MR. WATSON: That's correct. I think what we did in 1976 was very workable, and that is, that we established on behalf of the Carter/Mondale group, a headquarters building which was in the old HEW Building up near the Capitol with the overflow being in the Old Executive Office Building. And I, as the transition director, and Hamilton and Jody and all the rest of us, basically operated out of that building or those two buildings. I've also asked the Cabinet and department agency heads to anticipate making available an office space in their agency for the particular team that will come to their agency for the transition, and they'll do that.

But that's not necessary for here. I found in 1976 that a great deal of the work that needed to be done, the coordination that needed to be done between me and Jack Marsh could be done on the telephone. I haven't checked the record, but I suspect that during the 10-week period of transition, Mr. Marsh and I did not meet more frequently than once a week on the average.

Q He's asked or indicated he will ask for any additional information on the budget or Office of Management and Budget than you asked four years ago?

MR. WATSON: We've not discussed that yet. It's that kind of information, that kind of detail really that we will be moving towards and that, in that case, will basically be decided by Jim McIntyre, his senior transition official and the folks who approach him about the budget.

Q Has McIntyre designated a transition official yet?

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MR. WATSON: I'm getting the list from everybody of the transition officials. I don't have them, but when I do have them, we'll make it available to you.

Q What is the money used for that will be given to the outgoing administration for transition? To move files and that kind of work?

MR. WATSON: Yes, basically there's a huge logistical operation that's involved in the movement of an outgoing president and vice president with all of their files and everything.

Q Yesterday, the President indicated that he would probably work on his memoirs somewhere near where his files were moved to. Do you yet know where his files are going?

MR. WATSON: No, I do not.

Q Are you going to be shutting down your lobbying operation on Capitol Hill or do you still have some bills that you want to see worked through as a lame duck?

MR. WATSON: We will not shut down our operation on Capitol Hill. As all of you know, the Congress is coming back into session next week. We will determine in consultations with the leadership on the Hill what high priority items we might be able to close on in this remaining session. Those decisions have not been made, so any questions that you would pursue me on there, I'd have to say we've not made any final choices yet. We will be consulting with the leadership on them. But there's a government to be run, there are responsibilities to be discharged, and we will do that vigorously between now and January 20th.

Q Leaving aside legislation,

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there are still executive things that this government can do, some of which the incoming Administration might not like you to do. For example, my understanding from ABC is that you would like to have, do a lot of civil rights -- initiate a lot of civil rights lawsuits. And they're not sure whether the incoming people want them to or not, but they're inclined to do it anyway if you're going to let them. There's also the question of appointments of judges and so forth. How is all of this going to be handled?

MR. WATSON: Basically, the same answer. We will make those decisions in consultation with the people who are involved with us in executing those kinds of decisions. In the case of the judgeships, for example, we have numerous nominations pending on the Hill. Whether or not it will be possible to move the confirmation of some or all of those judges remains to be seen. I can't answer that here. The President has spoken as to who his nominees are, and it would be our hope that they would be confirmed. But that's something to be determined.

Q With Marbury versus Madison. How about the other one -- Suppose the Education Department wants to really enforce, really initiate a lot of lawsuits that the Reagan Administration would have to either drop or go through with --

MR. WATSON: Let me give you the same answer again. Make no mistake about this. The Administration and the conduct of the affairs of this government remain under the direction of President Carter until January 20th. We will exercise those duties and those responsibilities in accordance with his best judgments as to what ought to be done between now and January 20th. So if decisions need to be made about proceedings with this or that matter, even though they cannot be concluded between now and January 20th, we will do so. But those judgments I cannot make in accordance with some formula. The government does not stop. The President's responsibility to govern and to lead and to initiate do not terminate on November 4th. They terminate on January 20th.

Q -- executive decisions are that you know of that needs to be made before, let's say, the end of the year or before January 20th?

MR. WATSON: I'm getting a list of those now. I've asked the various agency heads and Cabinet Secretaries and other Executive Office of the President folks to prepare for the President's review that kind of a list, and we'll have such a list. I do not have it now. Yes, sir.

Q -- advice about Presidential appointments such as whether sub-Cabinet officials should be determined by the Cabinet appointees themselves or whether such a control --

MR. WATSON: I did not.

Q -- you characterize the attitudes that -- would you care to characterize Mr. Meese's attitudes and response --

MR. WATSON: My conversation with Mr. Meese reflected to me, Walter, that he had the exactly the same approach, exactly the same aims and desires. In my conversation with Jack Marsh yesterday, I learned that Jack had also already talked to Ed Meese and, in fact, had prepared some briefing material for Ed based on the 1976 experience. I fully expect that the attitudes that I have expressed on behalf of the President and this government are reflected by the Reagan people.

MR. POWELL: Anything else?

MR. WATSON: Yes, ma'am.

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Q What are your own personal plans for after January 20th?

MR. WATSON: I have no earthly idea. Thank you for asking, but I don't know.

Q --- legal counsel's office put anything out to people as far as job seeking, or are there any regulations or rules that pertain to this transition period?

MR. WATSON: I'm glad you asked the question. I hadn't thought of that because it doesn't really pertain to the transferral of the authority of the government. But what the President wants to do, and what we will do in off-duty hours, is to assist the folks in the Executive Office of the President in finding their own job opportunities. We'll do that in a way which simply gives them the opportunity to know where opportunities are outside the government, to assist them as they require in the preparation of their resumes or their contacts and so forth. All of that will be done after working hours. But it will be done because I think it's going to be necessary to help them, some of us find a new job. Thank you all.

MR. POWELL: Any questions on anything else?

Q What about your plans?

MR. POWELL: I haven't thought of that either. What I'm really more concerned about right at the moment with, the folks in the campaign, others that don't have until January 20th. They've just got until Friday. So, we'll worry about them for the moment.

Q -- Nofziger or any of your counterparts in Reagan's camp?

MR. POWELL: I spoke with Nofziger today to congratulate him and to tell him that we were ready to help them out as far as press operations are concerned whenever they were ready. He was -- as you know, they were getting ready for a press conference. So, we didn't have a long conversation about it. And that won't be separate necessarily from the regular transition operation. But, Nessen was very helpful to me, and his people, in '76 and early '77. And I hope to return the favor.

Q Did he communicate to you that he would be coming to Washington?

MR. POWELL: He didn't. I didn't ask about that.

Q Can you bring us up to date on what the status of our communications with Iran and the President's thinking on how -- what the next steps are as far as he's concerned?

MR. POWELL: Well, that -- the possibility for bringing about the release of our people under the conditions and within the bounds set forth by the President repeatedly and, most recently, a few days ago is continuing, is being pursued. I'm not going to get into the details of how we're going about that. And I can't -- I really can't characterize it beyond that.

Q The President said more recently that he was more encouraged than at any time in the past -- sometime in the latter days in the campaign, but there was still no timetable. I guess it was election day. I don't remember the exact date. But in any event, does that statement still stand --

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MR. POWELL: The answer is there is still no basis for a timetable or a date.

Q What's the status of their being transferred to Algerian custody or --

MR. POWELL: I don't know anything more than the public statements that have been made.

Q Jody, has there been some -- you're indicating that there's something really going on here -- more than --

MR. POWELL: No, not more than usual. I mean, you know the Iranians made a statement in an action by the Majlis. We view that as being a possible basis for -- as something positive and possibly a basis for settling this thing. And that is being pursued, aggressively.

Q Jody, can you say whether the President intends to say publicly or through you whether he accepts the conditions?

MR. POWELL: I think the President made his comment on -- some days ago.

Q But he didn't say whether he had accepted the conditions. Will we find that out?

MR. POWELL: I think, as I said, the President, if you'd read what he had said, I think most people were able to understand it.

Q Jody, when -- they are asking for some kind of public response. You're telling us that your feeling is that --

MR. POWELL: I think the President has made a statement. I'm not responding to the statements from Iran.

Q Let me ask you then. They've asked for a public statement. Are you -- is there going to be one?

MR. POWELL: I'm not going to comment on -- this is not something I think will be handled between -- with my comments from the briefing room.

Q Has this government received from the Iranian government, the text that the Majlis directed it to prepare, of the conditions?

MR. POWELL: I think I'd check with State on that.

Q What do you mean, pursuing aggressively?

MR. POWELL: Well, in the common definition of both terms. I'm not going to any more go into detail of what sort of, about what channels or means or so forth now than I was earlier.

Q Any new people been appointed, or is anyone on the way to Tehran?

MR. POWELL: I'm just not going to get into that.

Q Jody, can you tell us about -- the President had mentioned at one point meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister. Was that only if he were re-elected?

MR. POWELL: That -- didn't he say the other day that he was still looking toward doing that?

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Q He still hopes to do that. Have you got definite news?

MR. POWELL: No, I don't.

Q Do you have any idea, the President said he would be up at Camp David for the next week, but he'd come down if absolutely necessary. Do you have any idea when --

MR. POWELL: I already said he's expected to be back and forth --

Q -- when is the next time he'll be down here?

MR. POWELL: -- ad-hoc basis.

Q My understanding when I heard him yesterday was that he plans to take no vacation other than his stops back and forth at Camp David.

MR. POWELL: Well, I don't know any more than what you have heard, frankly. I think he was asked if he had planned to take some extended vacation later on this month or something, and he indicated not.

Q Will he go to Plains Christmas would you expect?

MR. POWELL: I just do not know.

Q Do you see him coming back this weekend barring any kind of development?

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MR. POWELL: Helen, I just don't know.

Q Does the President have any -- I don't know how to ask this -- has he had any second thoughts at all about his going to make a concession statement on election night before the polls closed on the West Coast? There have been several statements.

MR. POWELL: Yes. I know. I'm glad you asked that. In fact, I noticed a peremptory conclusion drawn by Mr. Schram in the Washington Post today that the quote "the President's statement" had resulted in, quote, "thousands of Democrats failing to go to the polls" and apparently had contributed to the defeat of Democratic candidates out there.

He went further to use that as a metaphor for the whole administration which I think may have been more appropriate than he knew. The fact of the matter is, as I think everybody knows, that the President's statement was made, I think in some cases, a couple of hours after the news organizations had said that Governor Reagan had won. It was being broadcast all over the West Coast.

Q Not all of them.

MR. POWELL: Not all of them. That's right. (Laughter.)

Q That's true, Jody, but his making a concession statement obviously has greater impact than --

MR. POWELL: Well, we'll put you in the same category as Mr. Schram. Is that something you intuitively know or is that something you just figured out for yourself last night?

Why do you think the President --

Q Well, put it in Ullman's words then.

MR. POWELL: Well, being involved in the loss of the election, myself, I recognize and sympathize with the inclination and under those circumstances to look for some reason for your defeat that pertains more to somebody else than to you is a natural human tendency, but I would just submit, one, as I said, anyone whose participation in the election was going to be affected by their knowledge or lack of knowledge of the outcome clearly knew how that election was coming out and I am tempted to say, look to your own skirts if you're concerned about that. But, I won't say that, because as a matter of fact -- no, let me finish -- as a matter of fact, there is, as I think most people who are familiar with this thing know -- Mr. Schram was either ignorant or chose to ignore it -- there's been a great deal of work done on whether or not knowledge of the outcome of elections influences voting behavior. I can't say that I've surveyed every piece of work on that, but generally speaking, I think the conclusion is that knowledge of the outcome of an election does not affect, or to say it the way it has to be stated in terms of a scientific matter, that it is very difficult to come up with any empirical evidence to support the idea that knowledge of the outcome of an election affects voting behavior.

So --

Q Why then -- let me ask in a different way --

Q -- so early then. What went into the decision at that point?

Q Because you said that --

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MR. POWELL: Well, just basically because it was -- I don't want -- I don't mean for this to be a restatement, but it happens to be a fact that it seemed to us that it was clear to everybody who was even remotely interested in who won that election, who won, and it wasn't us. And that having been clear for some number of hours, it just seemed that the appropriate and the decent thing to do was to go ahead and make that statement, rather than attempting to impose some artificial and meaningless delay on it -- and it truly was meaningless by that point rather, and in fact a trifle ungracious to sit there and artificially say well, we can't say anything until the polls are closed because it might -- we certainly considered that factor -- because it might -- the claim that we thought it might affect voting behavior on the West Coast, when frankly we knew that it was not going to affect voting behavior on the West Coast.

God knows we certainly would not want to do anything that would be harmful to the Democratic Party or to the individual Democrat and I obviously regret if there are those who even wrongfully feel that that happened, but they just happen to be wrong. As I said, it's a very natural human sort of attitude. I thought of several reasons and excuses for our defeat myself over the past several days, but I'll save that for another forum.

Q Jody, there's something that has been troubling me and probably would be better directed -- should have been directed to the President yesterday. But, his finale was that he wants the next 2-1/2 months to be the best of his administration. How is that possible in a lame duck era where his power has practically evaporated except for the day-to-day routine, maybe the hostages? Can you explain what he meant by that?

MR. POWELL: I think he referred to the way in which we conduct ourselves and the manner in which we discharge our responsibilities which are ours and --

Q But, you have no ability to really act other than in the Iranian --

MR. POWELL: You have, I think as Jack said, you have a job to do and it may not be exactly the same job that you had before, but you've got to do that. And I think that's what he meant.

Q It surely can't be the best 2-1/2 months. You wouldn't want the judgment of the administration (inaudible)--

MR. POWELL: You can do your best whatever the circumstances, and that's what I think he meant.

Q You have to admit that he can't do much.

MR. POWELL: Well, I don't want to argue with you about that. I think you understand the reference that he made.

Q Jody, what are your priorities from the lame duck session on the Hill?

MR. POWELL: I think Jack just responded to that. I can't be any more help than he has.

Q You don't plan to push the tax cut bill or revise some type of controversial --

MR. POWELL: Well, we've never planned to push a tax cut bill. Remember that?

Q -- or continue consultations with appropriate committees?

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MR. POWELL: As Jack said, that is something which we will need to talk with the leadership about before we deal with it.

Q Thank you.

Q Thanks, Jody.

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(4:15 P.M. EST)